

**Proponent Testimony SB2**  
**Public Health, Welfare and Safety Committee**  
**January 14, 2011**

PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY  
Exhibit No. 9  
1/14/2011  
Bill No. SB 2

*Dear Chairman Murphy, and respected committee members,*

*My name is Connie Vergine. Thank you for allowing me to speak to you today. I have been a dental hygienist in Helena for the last 31 years, since graduation from Carroll College in 1978. Today you have the opportunity to make Montana a state with a Dental Sealant Program that is provided by, and administered by dental hygienists. I firmly believe that hygienists are totally capable, of providing this service in the school system.*

*I beseech you to listen to the facts, not the fears. I have personally testified at the Montana Legislature many times on issues that have expanded the profession of dental hygiene. Organized dentistry has opposed nearly every bill presented in this arena, and I ask that you clarify the information they may present in opposition.*

*In my office, the hygienists provide sealants as do dental assistants. I am able to assess the need for sealants prior to sealing. In fact, I not only give my co-diagnosis of sealant assessment but other treatment as well. It is expected of me!!*

*Sealants are a simple preventive procedure delegated to dental hygienists and /or dental assistants. In my office, we provide sealants alone with no help. I would like to explain that assistants are NOT required in Montana to be formally educated, certified, or licensed. Assistants provide allowable services only under the direct supervision of the dentist. Hygienists are the only auxiliary allowed to practice under general supervision, and are the only licensed, college educated professional auxiliary in the dental office. It is time and cost effective for dentists to delegate sealants to hygienists or assistants who are paid a lesser wage than hygiene.*

*It is unfortunate that many children from low income homes are turned away because it is difficult if not impossible to find offices that accept new Medicaid patients. If all children were being seen successfully in this state, we would not have the amount of dental disease that exists. Why not establish a Sealant Program in schools to better serve our children? Programs such as this have been established and successful in 39 other states. Why would you be hesitant to add Montana to the list of those states?*

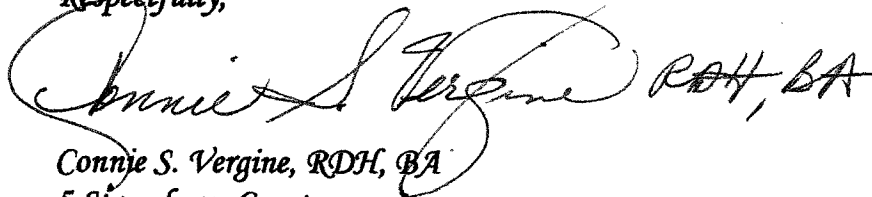
*I ask you carefully weigh to the positive proponent testimony to this bill and not be swayed or misguided by the agenda of political turf wars.*

*In my opinion, I believe those the dentists who oppose us may fear that dental hygienists will have more independence to practice. I believe organized dentistry will oppose any change in dental hygiene that enhances our practice act or leads to independent hygiene. There are states that currently allow independent hygiene.*

*I am in favor of this bill. It is a wonderful way of serving the children of Montana who are not being seen in private offices. I personally have been an advocate and in favor of Independent Hygiene, a Board of Dental Hygiene, and the expansion of our practice act. SB2 would be a small step toward allowing hygienists to practice in another setting that is outside a private office. Our professional life can be expanded in a way that will truly benefit the children and their parents in this state.*

*Vote YES for SB2. Vote Yes for the children. It is the right thing to do.*

*Respectfully,*

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Connie S. Vergine RDH, BA". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and address.

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